

TOMAHAWK ARCHERS

P.O.Box 512 Temperance, MI 48182 TomahawkArchers@yahoo.com www.TomahawkArchers.com

Dear Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee,

Holly Hughes (R) Committee Chair, 91st District
Curt VanderWall (R) Majority Vice-Chair, 101st District
Jason Sheppard (R) 56th District
Scott Dianda (D) Minority Vice-Chair, 110th District
Cara Clemente (D) 14th District

I am writing to you on behalf of the board and members of Tomahawk Archers about the proposed bill to exempt sportsmen clubs of property tax. I was very glad to see it pass the Senate and I am hoping you'll see it a worthy bill on your side to turn into law as well.

Tomahawk Archers exists "to practice, protect and perpetuate the sports of archery and bowhunting within the community, encourage good ethics and sportsmanship among all participants, cooperate with local, state and federal wildlife and conservation organizations in regards to land and wildlife management, to sponsor indoor archery leagues, maintain a field course and conduct outdoor tournaments and games in accordance with the rules of Tomahawk Archers, Inc."

This is done by providing a safe place for archers to practice indoors and outdoors on our 40-acre property. We do charge for a membership to access our grounds as it is very expensive to provide safe backstops, maintain an indoor range, and maintain/preserve our outdoor range. Our property lies within the globally distinct region of the Oak Openings, which The Nature Conservancy describe as one the last great 200 places on earth.

We cannot just perpetuate the sport of archery or promote good land stewardship by preaching to our members. Therefore, we open our grounds once a month for Public Shoots where we offer free rental equipment and instruction for all ages. We also open our doors 6 days a week to the public for our indoor winter leagues that run from January thru March. These indoor leagues provide great recreation opportunity and learning of archery for the public during winter months.

Tomahawk Archers also partners with many local conservation groups to give them a place to promote their messages. We have hosted National Wildlife Federation for a dinner and campfire after national meetings in the area. We are proud partners of Oak Opening Green Ribbon Initiative and allow The Nature Conservancy to help manage our grounds through various grants. Our gates are always open to local scouts, and we recently were the beneficiary of an Eagle Scout project that erected a Flag Pole and strategically placed benches throughout our property. Representative Jason Sheppard was in attendance at the ceremony and has seen firsthand the beauty of our grounds and willingness to open it to youth groups.. We are affiliates of Wild Ones, whom promotes environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration and establishment of native plant communities. Tomahawk is also very proud of it's Monarch Joint Venture partnership. Another strong partner is Michigan United Conservation Clubs. We are an affiliate club and each and every member also belongs.

We have a great partnership with our local paper to promote conservation and events at taking place for the public to enjoy at Tomahawk. Many in the area know us more for our "Oak

Opening Conservation” than for our archery range. However, one of the best shoots we do is World Dragon Shooting Day. This charity event raised thousands of dollars for our local Bedford Township Veterans Center, and in the past has helped families with the loss of parents, a wife, and cancer diagnosis.

Tomahawk is very proud of our active habitat management. With help and direction from The Nature Conservancy we have turned our grounds into more than just a place to shoot. We are home to the first documented Pileated Woodpecker in Monroe County in over 100 years according to Michigan Audubon Society. We host many rare, unique, plant species that are host to many different butterfly species. We hope to expand our Lupine patches in hopes of restoring the endangered Karner Blue Butterfly. We have worked with The Nature Conservancy and our local fire department so they we may perform controlled burns when necessary on the property for invasive species control and to promote native biodiversity. This habitat work is put on display to the community annually through hosting free “Blue Week” hikes

Michigan Agricultural Environmental Assurance Program will soon be certifying our grounds. We are surrounded by agricultural land and need to do our part to protect Lake Erie. We are hoping this will help the other farmers in the area get their land certified and take voluntary actions to help clean up our lake before mandatory laws are enforced on our farming friends.

All of these great things for our community are done on a shoestring budget income of less than \$50,000. We have zero paid staff and everything is accomplished through voluntarism. Property Taxes make up 10% of our expenditures. Our 2018 taxes came to \$4,979.65. I do not have our final year end financial in front of me but I assume it will be close to 2017 when we disbursed \$48,005.75 with \$4,877.66 going to property taxes.

If we were able to invest this money back into Tomahawk Archers there are a number of things we can do to even better support our community. We would look into expanding our indoor range. Our youth league will see well over 100 kids come through on two different nights. That many kids and their parents make for a lot of people in a small old schoolhouse. We’ve also been approached by a Local Boy Scout troop if we’d be interested in being a host for their troop. We’ve had to decline in the past because we just simply didn’t have the room. Our property would be better maintained as we could sign a long term contract with The Nature Conservancy as we would have some money to provide matching funds for grants and services they provide. This in turn could expand to neighboring properties that not only make the grounds better, but helps clean up Lake Erie, that our community is unable to enjoy in the summer months due to water health issues that originate on land. We could also start exploring reimbursing volunteers for their time teaching archery or about our native flora and fauna. Our volunteers are great, but aging and burning out from doing so much for so long. A small cash incentive could bring in new blood to the ranks and really help us continue our message of conservation through archery. We fully support the House of Representatives complimentary bill to Senate Bill 1035.

Sincerely,

Patrick Hogan
Vice President of Tomahawk Archers

Please see the attached articles for some of our accomplishments:

By Paula Wethington
Monroe News staff reporter

The Nature Conservancy, a non-profit organization in the Toledo area, is helping the members of Tomahawk Archers restore a native landscape on the archery club property

If you walked in the woods behind Tomahawk Archers clubhouse at 2085 W. Eric Rd. during late April, you might have been startled at how barren the landscape appeared.

A controlled burn April 14 cleared leaves, small plants and seedlings out of nearly 30 acres of the property. Only tall and bare tree branches remained to indicate the area's identity as part of the environmentally significant oak openings habitat of northwest Ohio and southeast Michigan.

But there's no reason to be concerned. The fire was set on purpose, with the goal of restoring the property to its original appearance. If all goes as expected, young plants that are considered native to the oak openings region will significantly fill in the open spaces by June.

There already were signs of that rebirth less than two weeks after the burn, when Patrick Hogan, vice president of the club, and Lindsey Reinarz, a staff member from the Nature Conservancy, inspected the property, following the trails where the club members have their targets set up.

And while the burn was the most visible step, the restoration project actually started three years ago with the help of the Nature Conservancy. The partnership between the club and organization will continue for perhaps another three years and then the club members will be in a position to maintain the property in the desired manner.

The conservancy is a nonprofit organization with locations around the world. The Toledo-area office is in Swanton, Ohio, where its interests include helping to preserve the oak openings environment.

Steve Woods, oak openings program manager for conservancy, said most people in the area know about the unique landscape at Oak Openings Preserve Metropark in Toledo, but that is just one spot of what was once a much bigger ecological system in northwest Ohio and southeast Michigan.

He estimates about 99 percent of the oak openings environment has been lost. As a result, "every acre counts," he said.

Mr. Woods explained the origins of the ecological system: First, the glaciers created sand dunes during their migrations in the Great Lakes area. Then the prairie and forested wetlands filled in the space with a varied and diverse habitat. Even just a few feet in elevation, he said, results in noticeable differences in what plant and animal species settled into a particular spot in oak openings.

Ms. Reinarz said the native peoples who used to live in this region understood the value of fire clearing the space to allow new growth to begin.

"These ecosystems evolved with fire," Mr. Woods said.

It just hasn't been a common land management strategy in modern times. And, yes, the forest has filled in significantly over the years.

Mr. Hogan, who came to the archery club many times with his family while growing up, can point out where the woods expanded into areas that he recalled as prairie.

As the Oak Openings staff explained, natural areas such as this property help filter pollutants and dirt as rain and stormwater moves into Lake Erie. When it is not crowded, the forest also allows the water to soak into the ground rather than become runoff.

It was about three years ago when the Nature Conservancy contacted the club, asking if the members were interested in habitat restoration. They got a welcome response.

"Part of our model is finding landowners who want to have their property restored. We have the expertise in this. We have the tools and resources," Mr. Woods explained.

Grant money from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has paid for the expenses. That was a welcome resource for the club, which Mr. Hogan says operates "on a shoestring budget."

The effort in previous years included clearing shrubs and smaller trees. The club members also learned which plants were invasive and crowding out native species. The controlled burn itself was a three-hour effort, but with hours of planning and with monitoring afterward.

The goal is to encourage the natural space to restore itself. Ms. Reinarz explained the seeds for desired plants were in the forest all along, but they kept getting crowded out.

"First the plants come back, then the animals return," Mr. Woods said.

For information, visit www.oakopenings.org.

Another from MJV:

"Why don't you come to our club? We'll teach you how to fling a few arrows." That's how it all started.

Three years ago, Patrick Hogan of Tomahawk Archers posted a request for milkweed seed on Facebook. The archery club, located on 43 acres in Temperance, MI, has an oil pipeline running through club property. Mr. Hogan was interested in planting milkweed along the pipeline with local Boy Scout troops. He was in need of seed and plants, and planting guidance. I long had an interest in learning archery. "Sure, I'll come fling a few arrows," I said.

During our first visit to the club my family joined club members and their families for a presentation by Rob Mies of the Organization for Bat Conservation. After a family lesson in archery we walked out of the clubhouse, straight into the forest.

The club is situated in the Oak Openings, a globally rare ecosystem on par with the Everglades. I instantly recognized the conservation value of the property. Fringed gentian, hairy puccoon, wild columbine, round-headed bush clover, blazing star, pussy toes, trillium, elderberry--natives too numerous to name were present. Many of these natives are important nectar sources for monarchs. A Pileated Woodpecker had recently been found nesting on the property, the first one seen in the county in 100 years. Eastern box turtles made the club their home, along with salamanders, raptors, and countless butterfly and moth species.

The property was a gem. But Mr. Hogan knew it needed help. Buckthorn had taken over the property. He was well aware how harmful this was for wildlife, reducing biodiversity and damaging the ecosystem. There was also the pipeline right-of-way and a hillside in need of a native planting. He asked if I knew anyone who could help. You bet I did.

An incredible partnership came together to make the native hillside and pipeline plantings possible, including several MJV partners. Tomahawk officers, Mr. Hogan and I began making plans to restore the property. My fellow Wild Ones members and Nature Conservancy staff joined Tomahawk members, and planted a native prairie seed mix on the hillside just outside the clubhouse doors. Wild Ones collected seed from Tomahawk, which was added to seed purchased from Naturally Native Nursery to create the seed mix. Toledo Metroparks supplied plugs of dense blazing star for a low swale. Monarch Watch supplied common and swamp milkweed for the hillside and pipeline through a grant from the Natural Resources Defense Council. Enbridge agreed to adjust their mowing schedule to allow the natives to go to seed on the pipeline.

Our efforts in creating native habitat on the pipeline and hillside generated interest in doing even more. Club members worked hard to cut down the buckthorn that had taken over areas of the property. But restoration of the entire property seemed an overwhelming prospect for the club membership alone, so in stepped another conservation partner, The Nature Conservancy.

Through a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, TNC began work and cut down large stands of the buckthorn. Beneath these stands was a vast amount of wood debris and leaf litter that would likely prevent the native seed bank from germinating. It was time for the next step--a prescribed burn. This would remove excess wood, leaf litter and tick and mosquito breeding sites. It was a win-win for club members and wildlife. The Nature Conservancy and Tomahawk officers met with city officials, educating the public and garnering support for the burn. As a result of their efforts, a prescribed burn was conducted this spring on 30 acres of the club's property. Says Patrick Hogan, "I just appreciate when TNC, who works on high quality properties, comes out and says how impressed they are with our little patch. It makes you really want to restore the property."

Wildflowers and milkweeds are already emerging, enhancing habitat for monarchs, pollinators and more. Warblers are moving through, and the forest and prairie are alive with song. A woodcock calls from the restored wet prairie. Mourning cloaks brush past archers as they walk the archery course. An eastern box turtle greeted a delighted Scout. Rare plants have been found, prompting several native plant tours led by area experts.

I walk the grounds now with my bow, proud of the people and partnerships that have made this place so special. Birds, butterflies and bows. It doesn't get any better.

Resources:

Article from the Bedford News--Nature Conservancy Takes On Oak Openings Restoration in Temperance <http://m.bedfordnow.com/article/20160515/NEWS/160519370>

Oak Openings Region Green Ribbon Initiative <http://oakopenings.org>

Photos of hillside prairie planting at Tomahawk Archers https://www.flickr.com/photos/candy_kasey/albums/72157647462201056

Tomahawk Archers website <http://www.tomahawkarchers.com>

More recent articles of our accomplishments are available online and I would be happy to provide links to other stories.